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My Career Guide Part I

Starting Your Own Business

Marjorie Mensink

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Starting Your Own Business

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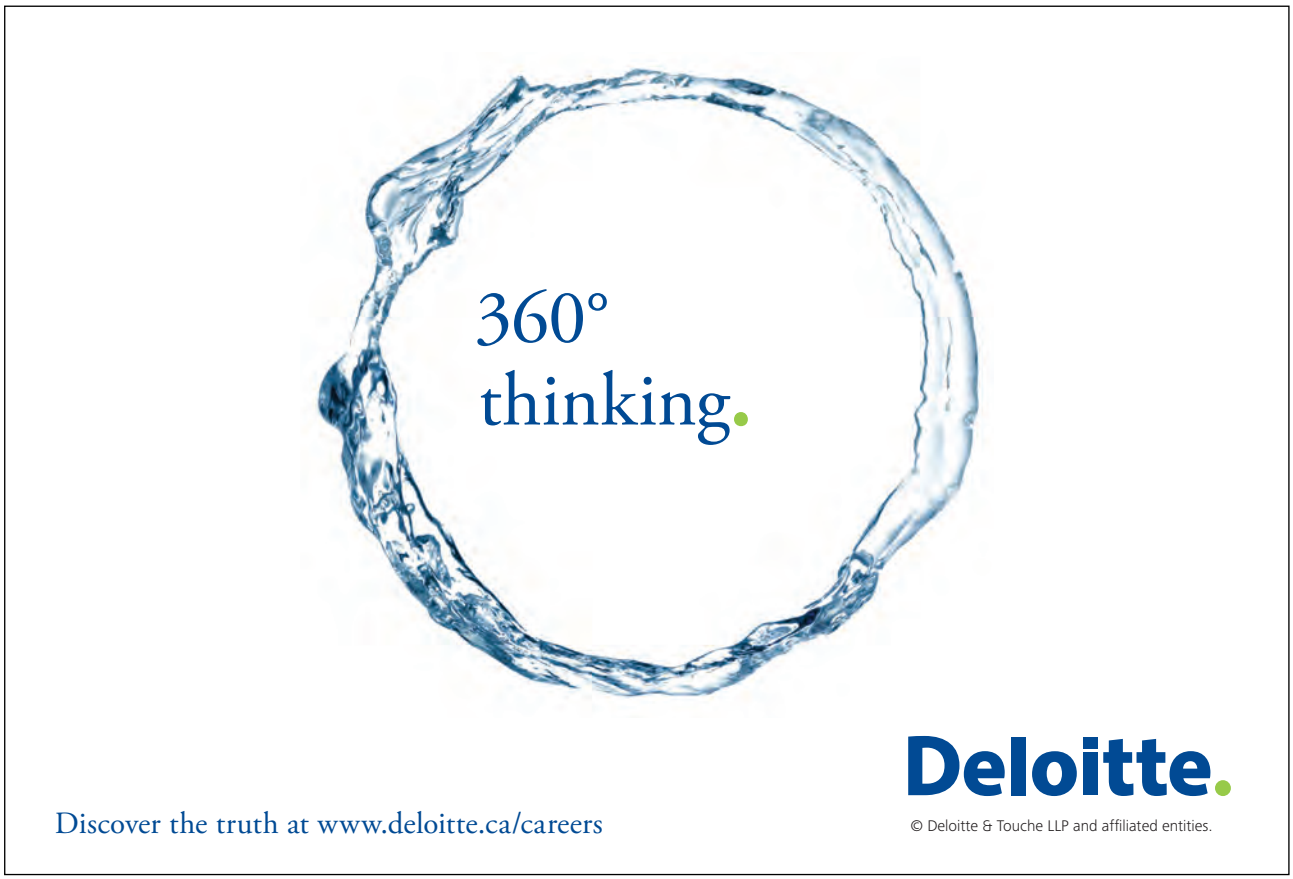

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1 Introduction to Starting Your Own Business

Trial and error, trial and refine—great things are built this way. This workbook is compiled from a huge database as well as a lot of experience in guiding people through their careers. It is not a scientifically sound book, and we don't present high-sounding theories. What you will find though is a practical guide that will lead you to your true career purpose.

There are many books available in bookstores and on the Internet—books that deal with the subjects of career choice and finding a satisfying job.

In reading these books, I developed an urge to write my own book. You will see that I provide you with exercises and information that are a bit different from what you read elsewhere. I offer you both information and an approach that worked well for me and for thousands of my clients. I hope it serves you well also.

1.1 What You Will Learn from Staring Your Own Business

We deal with the question, "Is self-employment or starting a small business something that is worthwhile to you?"

- Learn what you need to have in order to be an entrepreneur or self-employed.
- Understand the seven reasons to become an entrepreneur or self-employed.
- Learn a four-step plan to explore career possibilities.
- Learn a five-step test to validate business ideas.
- Get some ideas for a side business/sidecar.
- Learn ten pitfalls of being self-employed.
- Know the highlights of marketing your business.
- Learn a seven-step plan to keep your business going.

1.2 What Will You Find in Part Three?

- A step-by-step guide to your true career calling.
- A system to eradicate roadblocks and obstacles.
- A test to identify your preferences in your working life, professional life, and in your private life.
- You will align your need profile with your career goals.
- A test to find out your favorite working roles.

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- A test to find the work environment most favorable to you.
- A test about your leadership profile.
- A test identifying your basic skills.
- A warm-up exercise for all your test results.

Next to it, you are provided with a guide for job-oriented networking talks and a guide for self-employed and small-business network talks.

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2 Starting your own Business

Most people have thought about being self-employed at one time or another. The reason for this varies: because one has a good idea, because one would rather be his or her own boss, because someone wants to become rich, or even because someone just got laid off or fired.

Being self-employed is not that difficult to accomplish. After working for a company for a few years as an IT specialist, accountant, or lawyer, many highly educated people begin working for themselves or freelancing. Many entrepreneurs do not have any unique product or service though; they are not any more brilliant or different from any one else. They do—more or less—the same as what they were previously doing as someone else's employee.

In this book, I discuss with you the pros and cons of entrepreneurship. How do these pros and cons work out in your specific situation? We assess whether entrepreneurship is a career choice you can make and/or could make. We do not contemplate making business plans, etc.—that's a topic for another book. My concern here is to work with you and reflect on whether entrepreneurship suits you. I devote a couple of pages to this subject because starting your own business is an overlooked and under-evaluated issue—as well an over-evaluated and under looked issue. The question of entrepreneurship as part of your overall career examination deserves a serious assessment

In the United States, 9.91 percent of the population is an entrepreneur and in the United Kingdom 10,6 percent. Many people around the world envision the USA as an entrepreneurial paradise. However, in 2008, the percentage of entrepreneurs in Europe was 12.1 percent! So, there is plenty of room for more entrepreneurship! What are the pluses and minuses out there, and what will you need to pursue entrepreneurship?

In this book, I mix-up terms for concepts such as entrepreneurship, self-employed, starting your own business, free agent, and freelance. In essence, they all have the same impact on you: leaving the world of the wage slave, and exploring the world of selling—yes, selling.

Because either way, you are going to sell your time (e.g., as a self-employed bookkeeper or plumber), your ideas (e.g., as a freelance journalist or as a consultant), or physical products in a shop or on the Internet.

The content of the business here may differ, but the common factor is marketing your business. (I'll briefly come back to the marketing subject further on.) The work content you do as a self-employed worker can be the same as that of a salaried employee. But you have to market your "thing" when starting out on your own. You must make some bookkeeping arrangements, and you must start everything yourself. Nobody will be watching you and telling you what to do.

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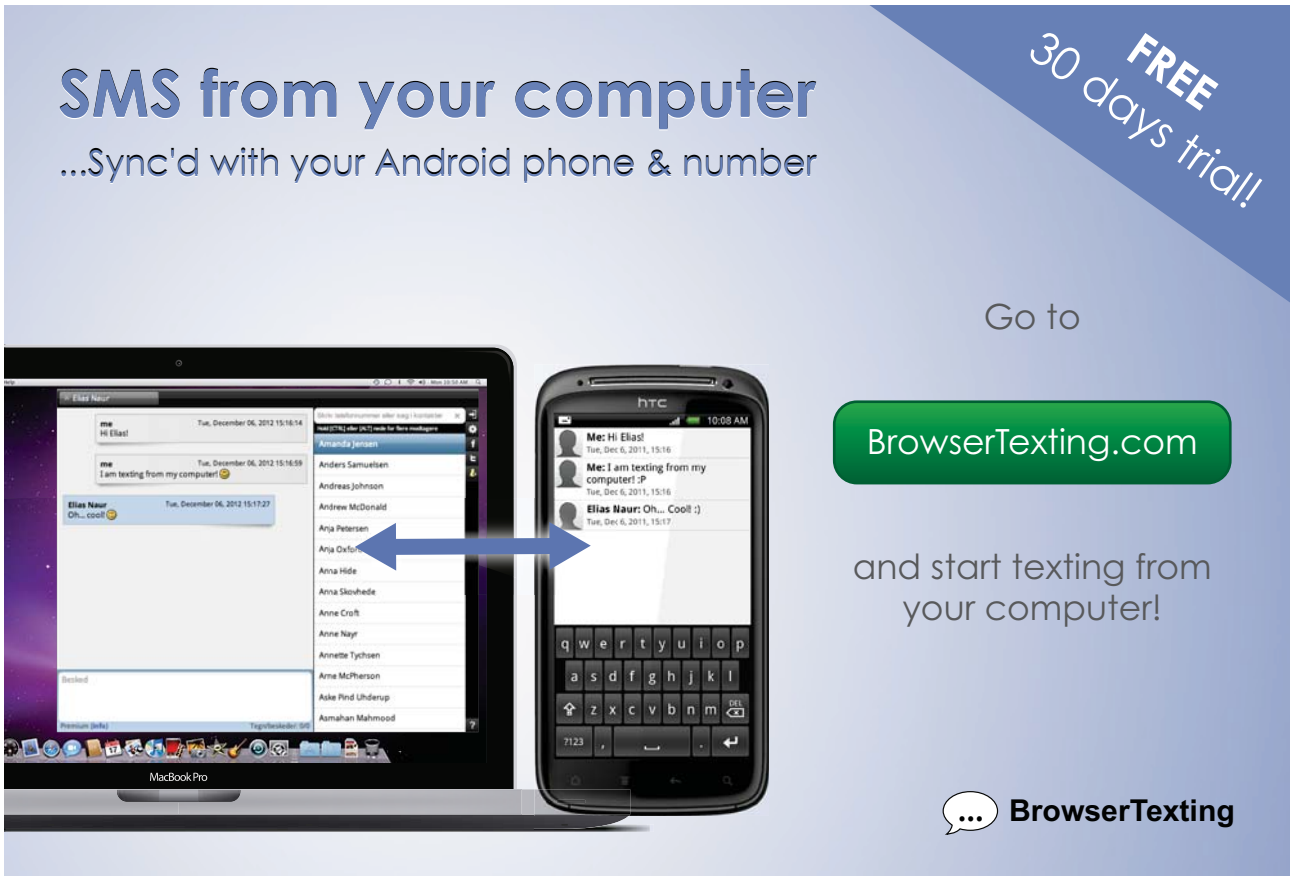
So bear with me, and for the sake of this part of *My Career Guide*, look at it this way. The important change in any case is to start things for yourself, market them, and keep records. This is the same for freelancers, self-employed workers, and small business owners, and that's why I mix the terms in this book.

2.1 Your Privacy Policy

Starting a business is a totally different experience from landing a job. The dynamics are different. If you are still in a regular job, then I advise you not to inform your employer about your ideas until you are absolutely certain about them and have started moving. Why is that? Well, bosses don't like to see good people walking away from their job. Some of them are liberal about it and it's not a problem. For others it is.

For the rest, forget what I told you about privacy unless you are still in a job. You must talk with many people about your ideas because you have no experience here; therefore, you must collect as much critical guidance and experience from others as you can.

When you are starting your own business, you can use as much advice as there is available. Nobody is going to tell you anything unless you ask him or her. So, go out and stimulate people to tell you their experiences, their successes, and their failures—and learn from them. Be open, but know whom you are talking to. Listen especially to people who have succeeded. People who have failed and returned to wage slavery could tell you what went wrong too. But be aware that they also could have had a personal trait that stood in the way of their success. Most of the time, people are blind to their own limiting mindset.



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3 Do You Need to Have Entrepreneurial Blood?

Some people are born into an entrepreneurial family but end up as an official. Others are born into a family of employees but seem to have entrepreneurial blood. Often, these people are driven to pursue trades in school, or they drop out of school and don't worry too much about studying—but they still become successful and rich.

Indeed, there are certain character traits that suit an entrepreneur more or less. For instance, you must be resistant to uncertainty—both mentally and financially. If someone who has been a major customer for five years suddenly announces that he no longer wants to cooperate with you, it's not only a blow to your confidence but also a blow to your wallet as well. Self-employment is not for the faint of heart. You have to be brutally honest with yourself, and you have to be willing to unearth upsetting information about what's "out there."

Of course, it is always a good idea to determine the reason why the customer does not want to do business with you anymore. Perhaps he had no choice due to cutbacks or other reasons that you can't influence.

If he finds you too expensive or complains about other aspects of your business, it is good to know what those aspects are. It just does not make sense to endlessly analyze why things went wrong. You must go on; otherwise, you only prohibit yourself. One of the key fundamental attributes an entrepreneur needs in order to reach any significant level of success in their business is perseverance. There are also many other important skills you need to learn and develop for success, but if you do not have perseverance then nothing else really matters. When you get tired…distracted…stressed…and to a point that you just cannot push forward, always remember…the band WILL continue to play another song, and you need to keep dancing…do not let the crowd ever see you stop.

If your business is truly the right opportunity, then the customers will come…it may not be on your timeline, but they will come. Stay focused. It will not be long before you have a new customer to join you, and then another, and then another…. If you can persevere, adjust some parts of your business when it's inevitable to do so, and have the discipline to stay focused. The reward is a life that satisfies you. A life that allows you to be who you really are.

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3.1 Freedom of Work

Another characteristic that makes entrepreneurial life easier is that you enjoy the freedom to work with many different people. You can put together a really great support team, and you should! Gather a group of people around you who can serve you as a sounding board and who can help in many areas—people who can work with you when the customer requires something more or something different from what you can deliver. Build your own organization—even if it is virtual. It is of great value for you, your customers, and your partners.

Make your team determined to do things differently and to give clients and customers' brokers the sort of flexible service they have always wanted.

If you are an introvert, you will find building a team and acquisition more difficult than an extrovert who loves talking and working with people. Extroverts show themselves in a more confident manner, which is important for the success of your business. The key for introverts is passion for the things they do. Show people your passion, and they will be attracted to it. You don't need to do much to market your products or services if people are intrigued by your passion, and they can see how it's going to work for them and that it will bring them value.

3.2 Be Open for Opportunities

Employees of large companies often think in terms of threats, such as from competitors or innovations that threaten the status quo…and maybe even their job. It's a terrible cliché, but an entrepreneur sees opportunities everywhere. Don't make a mistake. There is no big difference between employees and entrepreneurs. Most employees see for themselves the same opportunities. The big difference is that employees have no stake in opportunities that can cost them their job.

Entrepreneurs can't lose their jobs—they have no job. They can only win customers. As a result, entrepreneurs act more flexibly and creatively. They have better circumstances to allow them to deal with rapidly changing conditions, new rules, and new media. That's the reason why nowadays many large companies still have no idea where their place is on the Internet. Small companies dominate the Web. Remember that Amazon, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google, and so on started out very small! They were once nothing more than a garage start-up.

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4 Seven Reasons to Become Self Employed

4.1 You Solve Peoples' Problems

Every business has to sell something. And to sell something to anybody, those anybodies have to have a problem. If you sell golden rings, then the problem could be that someone is looking for an expensive gift or someone is so rich he wants to show it off. If there is no problem, there will be no business—and be aware, problems come and go. There was a time when one could make a living with repairing TVs and radios. But the equipment became less expensive, and the cost of repairing very quickly exceeds the cost of just buying new equipment. That development meant the end of a problem—the end of an honorable repair business.

If you are thinking about opening a salon in a city where there are plenty of these shops already available, you had better have something special to offer, otherwise, business will probably be horrible. And if you think you have something special for your clients, and this special thing will satisfy your clients' needs, then ask yourself, "How long could it take for the competition to copy my special thing?"

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If you want to know whether you have a chance, go to the local chamber of commerce. Ask for advice, figures, and details to support their point of view. How many businesses in your area of expertise began in the last three years? How many have succeeded? How many have not? You may find that you have found a gap in the market. You may also find that there is no problem you can solve, or that the market is already saturated with supply. You have some legwork for further exploration. How big (and how many of them) is the competition, and what is the quality they provide? How big is demand—the problem customers have, and how many of them are out there?

4.2 Entrepreneur's Dream

The best reason for you to start your own business is because you want to achieve an idea you have had for years. Maybe you have such a dream. Maybe you are the kind of person who seems to have an almost innate ability to dream bigger than your experience, history, or environment allows. Maybe you do have the desire, the passion, and the power to keep on going even in the face of insurmountable odds. What are your dreams? To be a tour guide in Italy, to have a carryout restaurant serving biodynamical meals, opening a hotel in the Bahamas, or even owning your own sports gym?

Take the following steps:

1. Identify your dreams, and write them down.
2. Imagine living out your dream. Perhaps your dream is different from the ones above, and you want to be financially independent or build a multi-million dollar business. Maybe it is having a business where you can determine your schedule or how much time you work this month. Imagine it, and write down the details.
3. Ask yourself, "What is keeping me from dreaming bigger than I do now?" Maybe you have had a recent setback financially, or too many things are taking up your precious time. Identify those things that are holding you back, and find a way to move past them. Use the tools I provided in part one of this book.
4. onw focused are you on expanding your dreams? Describe it in as much detail as possible. Write down every aspect of it. Revise it. Have others critique it. Memorize it. Tell others about it. Revise it some more.

If you have a dream, you feel that the drive is already there—the knowledge, maybe not, but you usually gain it along the way. The chance that your company becomes successful is greatest when you know the industry well. That is, if you have already been working in the industry. So starting up a McDonald's as an ex-accountant may be fun, but you need to know how the burger business operates, what the risks are, what the competition is doing, and what trade rules determine where and how you can have a restaurant.

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4.3 Dream Killers

The best motivation is a long-cherished wish, but reality is often not as nice as that dream. The operation of a guesthouse in Rhode Island means hard work in the summertime while the rest of the year is very quiet—and no guests means no money. Often, dreams are not profitable because the market is very small or seasonal, because a recession has just occurred, or because your competition initiates prize stunts or conspires to keep you at bay. Suddenly, that business colleague proves to be a competitor who would prefer to see you go bankrupt.

I know these examples are dream killers. Now it's your turn again. What can you do to prevent killing your dream? Resurrect it. Maybe that makes it no longer the same dream. You experienced death of your dream, and now your dream must be "reborn" and take on a life of its own. Talk about your dream. Ask people to critique it. Listen as objectively as you can. You may walk away discouraged, but take their advice to heart, and use it to make your dream better—to give it "new life."

Now, there are probably some obstacles keeping you from acting on your dream right now. Go back to part one of this book, and do some obstacle crushing. After that, return here, and outline the steps you need to take in order to make your dream become a reality. Then set a timeline for accomplishing these steps.

4.3.1 Know Your Business

I would not recommend that you start a business of your own in an area you are not very familiar with. So, if you still think that McDonald's thing is a good idea, why don't you pursue a job at the McDonald's fifty miles from where you want to start. Get to know the details of the business, and see if you like it as much as you thought you would. More importantly, learn from the mistakes they are making, and use them for your advantage in the future.

4.3 You See a Gap in the Marketplace

A gap in the market is really just a way of describing a situation where a problem in a given domain is solved badly for some or all of those affected by that problem. And for an entrepreneur, the opportunity in such a situation is to create a better solution. In favor—because they are easier to implement—are solutions created by taking some established technology and applying it in a novel context.

Be aware, ninety-five percent of solutions offered this way end up not bringing enough money in. Do your homework carefully. There is a chance you'll find yourself looking at something that you could actually do, the problem you've identified is real, the existing solutions do fall short, and that your approach would be attractive.

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In reality, you don't really need a "gap." Just finding an underserved niche, or a niche where you can do better than others have, could be a great opportunity.

Some people look into the market where they could see a healthy demand and produce a similar product to something already out there. It's hard work, but after a while, and through talking to customers, you could work out what the next emerging trend will be in that market and focus entirely on it. Without starting in the industry in the first place—working in it, and talking with customers on a day-to-day basis—it would have been impossible to find this gap.

No idea for an opening in the market? Here is a five-step plan for exploring your possibilities:

1. **What is your expertise?** Be thorough in looking at what you know about, and think through how you acquired that knowledge, which will tell you something about how you'll be able to build upon that base if you choose some unfamiliar context.
2. **What motivates you?** It's important to be motivated by more than the expected success; otherwise, you won't make it when things get tough.
3. **What problems exist in your domain of expertise or in related fields?** Problems could mean opportunities!
4. **What means of access do you have to people, products, and resources in your target domain(s)?** What actual resources do you have? What resources do you need?

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5. **Is there a gap in the market?** Maybe you see a gap in the market, and you do not want to indulge in your ideas or be bothered with the ideas and concerns of your current work environment. You want to be able to switch careers quickly, and you don't want to be hampered by internal bureaucracy! You want to own the proceeds for your efforts and have had enough of others showing off your ideas (and earning more from it too!). Then starting your own business is something you should seriously consider.

4.3.2 Validate Your Business Ideas!

For every business idea that pops into your mind, you can easily check its viability. The test I provide you with enables you to separate dreams that won't come true from good ideas.

The test saves you from a lot of frustration and lost time on ideas that will never work in real life. For instance, offering financial coaching to unemployed factory workers will be satisfying work and many clients will be interested in your service. But, will they be able to pay you for it? No.

Another example: You want to sell social media marketing services to an accounting firm. Can they pay you? Yes they can. Often, these firms are loaded with money as if they have a license to print it (which they don't have of course). But are they willing to pay you for this service? No, they won't because they have other marketing channels that fit them pretty well, and they have no need for new channels.

I think you have an idea by now about how the validating test is working. It's a simple five-question system:

1. Do you know (see) clients for your idea? The best clients are those who bought your product or service before. But if you invented the iPad, you created a new market, and you have to determine whether your target group will like it.
2. Do your target clients have the ability to pay for your product or service?
3. Do your target clients have the desire (are they willing) to pay for your product or service?
4. If you have a "No" so far, don't go any further with this idea. If you answered "yes" three times, then find yourself a potential client in real life and sell your product or service—no matter what.
5. Learn from step four, adjust your idea if necessary, and repeat all steps until you are certain about your business idea.

4.4 Never a Dull Moment

People who are responsible for their own businesses feel more committed to the business than common workers do. I know that may not be true for a lot of employees, but in general, it is true. I said it before, and I will say it again here: employees are no different from entrepreneurs and small business owners.

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They just have other interests, and that often makes them react differently. Why, as an employee, should you support a great business idea from someone else? The chances are that this idea could end up in the trash after many meetings, and it will just be wasted time. Time you would have spent on other tasks—tasks you could contribute to your own target list.

As an entrepreneur, you can and will work out your own ideas: How can you attract new customers, or how can you approach a customer problem? No one will solve these issues for you; nobody thinks in your favor or against it. The pressure created by these circumstances makes many people more creative than they ever thought possible…and others collapse (clam up).

As an entrepreneur, it is much easier to start something new. Imagine you are an IT consultant, and you want to approach an entirely new target group—the local government. Then you do just that. There is no need for strategy sessions, no need for approval from above, no bureaucratic fuss—you can just do it. If, after six months, your plan does not appear to catch on, too bad. No one will judge you for it. Of course, there is some risk involved here. And if you are a person who likes stability—regular meetings on Monday morning, lunch at twelve o'clock, and "normal" working hours—starting your own business is not a good idea. But for many others, this stability thing is just an abomination. They dream of no meetings and determining their own pace.

Working for yourself means that you are your own boss. However, this freedom has a downside: the work never stops. Can you handle that? Can you work hard the entire day, and then flip the switch in your head to go to the movies or out to eat with your loved ones—without thinking about work? Can you allow yourself to take a holiday once in a while? Not everyone can handle the freedom you enjoy as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship requires a lot of discipline. Whoever thinks that whining and bullshit will go away once they work in a private company is sadly mistaken.

However, it is true that self-employed workers no longer have to deal with superiors—people who tell them how things should be done. No more bosses who object to you coming in (too) late. On the other hand, you may have to deal with regulations and standards, and you will probably have more contact with the Treasury Department. You must do everything yourself, or if you do not feel like it, arrange for someone else to do it. In the latter case, you had better make sure you can afford it.

4.4.1 Involve Your Siblings

It is important to involve your closest family members in your decision to begin your entrepreneurship. They don't have to stand behind you 100%, but they do have to live with the fact that you will probably have more irregular hours and irregular income than when you were still employed. And on weekends, you may spend some time working on your business and not with the family. Even though self-employed people frequently work more hours than employees do, they report greatly enhanced levels of pleasure in their work. In one research study, company engineers said they felt tired and overworked much more frequently than self-employed colleagues did, even though they were working fewer hours than the self-employed engineers were.

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4.5 Financial Independence

People who seriously want to be rich won't achieve that goal as an employee—only a few top global executives demonstrate an exception to this rule.

Financial independence means earning the income you want while doing work you love to do. One without the other falls short. Earning the money you like without liking your work reduces your satisfaction and enjoyment even more.

We all know people who spend forty hours per week working in a job they don't enjoy, and on the weekend, they moan about how tough the work is and how hard they have been working. Most of the time, it is clear that these people aren't tired from hard work but from unsatisfying work. These people work as highly paid slaves.

What's even worse is that in some occupations, the difference between what your employer establishes and what you yourself will earn is crushing. The people in those professions are poorly paid slaves. This is true in the legal profession where trainees have to maintain the high salaries of the partners. However, auditors, accountants, IT specialists, journalists, and professionals from many different careers will often earn more as entrepreneurs than they do as employees.

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Having said this, it is good to know that nobody gets rich being self-employed or as a freelancer. As a rule of thumb, you can say that big money is only made by trading stuff and by using employees. You can make good money and realize a good living working on your own, but to make the big money, you have to build a business that you can eventually sell all at one time. A business that profits you even after you withdraw from it.

As an entrepreneur, you have the luxury of working your own hours and stretching your earning potential. As long as you handle things with decency, you can occasionally deduct personal expenses such as telephone, travel expenses, and meals from your taxes. Here you have to be careful. If the Treasury Department thinks you're cheating on your taxes by including private expenses as business expenses, you're in trouble. From that moment on, you run the risk of having to prove your costs with receipts and agendas. This also holds true when you make a mess of your records. The famous shoebox of receipts is not accepted by the Treasury Department.

4.5.1 Be Realistic about Your Income

As an independent, self-employed, freelancer—or whatever you want to call yourself—you soon earn a lot more than your former employed colleagues do. But appearances are deceiving, because employers often pay a lot for their employees: a portion of the pension and health insurance, disability insurance, vacation, travel, workspace, possibly your car lease, and meals along with other perks and bonuses.

Many beginners consider themselves rich, and many consider the money they earn as net income. But you have to pay income taxes and other payments—not to mention a premium on savings for retirement, health and disability insurance, holiday, travel, workspace, a company car, lunch meetings with colleagues and (potential) customers, and so on.

4.6 Tough Job Marketing

It sounds paradoxical, but redundancy can be a good reason for you to get started. This is especially true for senior citizens. They often have no choice: some companies are not waiting for a 57-year-old candidate, even if that candidate is an excellent employee.

Nevertheless, becoming self-employed doesn't have to be a negative choice. Many people have simply never thought about it, and they are probably better off starting their own business than sitting at home moping about weekly rejections.

If you still have a job, it cannot hurt to think about what you could do as an independent. In other words, try to imagine that in about one year, you are no longer working for your current employer, but you are working as an independent instead. What feelings does that thought arouse in your body? Are you excited—or worried? Your primary response is a good indication of whether you should leave the security of your current job or retain it!

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Anyone who isn't happy with his current work must first ascertain the causes for this before they take any drastic steps. Is the drag of the daily grind disappointing to you? If so, discuss this with your employer or find an employer who can deal with less-rigid working hours. You don't like your colleagues? Try working at another place before you give up on your career.

Use this book before you determine what career or profession is your "real calling." If that calling is a new field of work, then remember it is always wiser to accumulate some experience in that area before you dive into self-employment.

4.7 Working for or with Foreign Countries

People who want to live abroad can hope that their employer is posted abroad, but that is an unlikely opportunity. What's more important is to realize that your boss—not you—will decide where you go. But, it's good to know that, according to Manpower, this area of work is growing. In November 2009, about 500 Manpower clients were seeking jobs abroad, up from a few dozen six months earlier. While the number of globetrotting job candidates is still relatively small, the trend reverses a longtime pattern of far more foreign workers seeking jobs in the US. International companies are largely seeking candidates in engineering, computer technology, manufacturing, investment banking, and consulting. A quick search on Google informs you about the latest developments (Search Google: work from other countries.)

You could go to a country you would like to live in, and try to find work. However, as a foreigner, you don't have much of a chance if you are applying for a company in, let's say, Mexico or Italy unless you have qualities they seek.

If you still want to go abroad, establishing yourself as a self-employed business is your opportunity. Plenty of Americans build websites for the US market from sunny places in Mexico or the Caribbean. Aside from the better weather, the cost of living is also much lower in these places. Translators, editors, consultants, and IT professionals are all professions that allow you to work abroad.

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5 You Can Start a Business Driving a Sidecar

A sidecar is a business you launch without giving up your regular salaried job. You find time in the evenings and on weekends, or you limit the weekly hours you spend on your day job. The advantage is that you develop your business without leaping into something new all at once without a regular paycheck.

Starting a sidecar is a way of transitioning gradually to where you want to be next. You had better take care that your sidecar business doesn't hurt your employer. Having said that, there are still a lot of possibilities.

If you are a journalist at the local newspaper or radio station, you could do ghostwriting or editing work in the evening. If you are a hairdresser at a women's salon, you could do some men's haircuts in the evening or in a village twenty miles away from your day job. If you are a graphic designer and you enjoy computer-programming work, you could develop and build websites in the evening (as long as your employer doesn't offer this service as well). Or maybe you love antiques and know a lot about them, and you start a permanent garage sale for antiques while keeping your schoolteacher day job.

Some employers don't like sidecar activities, but you could look at it this way: He benefits too because he gets to keep a valuable employee—a person who is creative, thinks ahead, and dares to take challenges.

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6 The Mirror

6.1 Self-Employed and Freelancers Stereotyped

Years ago, at the Outplacement Agency I worked for, we had a list of the common types of freelancers[1]. Initially, we used it just for fun, but we found that there is some truth in it. Look at yourself in the mirror. If you recognize yourself in one extreme, you should give entrepreneurship a second consideration. Will you be happy, or do you continue to fool yourself by using the idea of entrepreneurship to escape something you find difficult to do? In either case, I advise you to read the list on the following pages. The typecasting is a bit extreme, though you might recognize someone you know.

Read these stereotypes, and think about it. I don't expect anybody to recognize himself in one caricature. But most men and woman recognize having some tendencies, mostly in a combination of two or three types. Knowing what your combination is gives you insight into your stronger points as well as the weaker parts you had better be aware of. There is a cautionary tale accompanying every entrepreneurial asset. Every advantage has its implicit disadvantage, and every disadvantage has its implicit advantage. Don't take it too seriously, don't let it discourage you, but do let it be a warning of the pitfalls of being self-employed. Self-employed means there is no one there to correct you. You have to do it yourself.

6.1.1 The Shopkeeper

Her main business is not what is written on her business card. The freelance practice itself is her playing field: She is playing shop. She must update accounts every day, the stamps must never be out of stock, and the automation of address data is a key strategic project. In extreme cases, she hardly ever sees a client or customer: She has no time for it. Many times, we see this with older people who are retired but feel too young to just sit and rest. The shopkeeper has a lot of discipline that keeps her going even if things get tough. If you combine your discipline with the traits of a workaholic, you could end up in a rut. But if you can combine it with some outgoing, people-oriented traits, you could be a solid self-employed service provider (bookkeeper, SME consultant, a trainer) in all kinds of subjects.

6.1.2 The Representative

If you do encounter him, it always goes "fan-tas-tic." He does not recognize "problems"—only "challenges." Life is a choice, and he engages that choice with both hands. His type talks about "we" when he really means "I."

The representative has many ideas for new ventures. His complaint is that things never get finished. Combined with some implementation discipline from the shopkeeper, things really could work out. He could be an interim manager, but also a consultant, someone running his own shop, a sales trainer, or a coach.

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6.1.3 The Mother (Can also be a man!)

The freelance practice is a friendly part-time activity, and it proves that ambitions sometimes go beyond simply caring. Freelancing can be an excellent combination because parents can easily combine it with feeding the family, working on school assignments, organizing ambitious birthday parties, and caring for sick children at home—parents can even let their child have a nice treat for a couple of days. If you are you telling yourself, "I could write a blog about this busy work and household in the local advertiser," then you have the picture.

The mother is very strong in organizing work and is caring and people-oriented. Making money is a weak point. The mother traits combined with a bit of the kick chaser assures a view of the outside world. A parent will come out of the house and have some exciting experiments that offer something to write about. Perfect jobs are in writing, journalism, website developing/building, communications, or a little (web)shop around the house.

6.1.4 The Moralist

Freelancing offers her an excuse to interfere in everything—without taking responsibility for anything! As a freelancer, she is responsive: recommendations from the past are no guarantee of future results. Indeed, she defends an entirely new direction as if she had never claimed anything else. The moral high presents itself preferably in non-profit organizations, political parties, and the media.

The moralist has a strong antenna for political subjects who are in vogue and have great energy for engaging people. If combined with representative traits, you have a local politician, and with a bit of the kick chaser, you have the perfect sales(wo)man.

6.1.5 The Workaholic

Evening work is standard, and at least three times a month, he stays up all night to get the work done. If he goes on vacation, it's never without a laptop. "Busy, busy, busy," he shouts before you've had a chance to ask how he is doing. The desk of the deadline junkie bends under piles of work. Actually, he should not even think about cleaning the office and getting rid of these piles upon piles of paper, because behind these piles is a yawning emptiness and the terrifying question: why?

The workaholic is productive no matter what he does. This combination with some of the moralist's gives him some contentment. This combination with shopkeeper traits makes him a perfect employee, but a disaster in self-employment. His siblings won't see him much. A bit of a workaholic in combination with other types works out well.

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6.1.6 The Kick Chaser

Her type is too restless to be in a regular job. She chases after kicks and wants to meet VIPs, know the latest gossip, and attend important receptions. Her freelance practice, along with her slick business card, offers her that opportunity. She is a networker for networking itself, and nobody knows exactly what she does—"something in consultancy"—but at least she is a good conversationalist.

6.1.7 The Loafer

Actually, he is not very interested in his discipline; freelancing is just one way he can earn money he needs for the pleasant things in life. His type is still the closest to the actual origin of the word freelancer: the freelancer who rents himself out to make money. He does it to keep his bank account out of the red, not because he enjoys struggling.

The loafer is very flexible and will likely have a creative, artistic mind. He can help anybody with tons of ideas. Focusing and really implementing things could be a problem though; however, the loafer traits combined with some moralist and/or shopkeeper traits makes a productive combination. A loafer combined with unsung talent traits ends up nowhere.

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6.1.8 The Smarty

The first time you meet his type, you're instantly impressed by his broad knowledge and enthusiasm. The second time, you desperately want to contribute something to the debate. And the third time, the admiration becomes irritation. Slim is the wiseacre—sure, but really only in rational terms. His emotional intelligence is seriously flawed.

The smarty is inspiring. His wit and bright ideas combined with practical knowledge makes him someone you must have around in any business. It is important for him to have many contacts to keep him alert and not too much self-confidence. Some moralist or mother traits also keep him out of the brink of the wiseacre area.

6.1.9 The Thousand-Things-Cloth

Her type does not accrue many engaging projects, because she (usually, it is a she) can always be misguided by clients who call with poorly-paying jobs that have yesterday deadlines. She is proud that she performs the impossible, and she hopes to get better jobs in the future out of gratitude.

The thousand-things-cloth is a trait every entrepreneur needs a bit of—but not too much—to be successful. This trait is moderating for the kick chaser and the smarty. The kick chaser and the smarty traits give the thousand-things-cloth the fearlessness to develop a sky-reaching approach.

6.1.10 The Unsung Talent

Actually, he is an artist—only the world doesn't know…or maybe, the world just does not agree with his claim. Deep in his heart, he despises his clients because they annoy him with practical concerns and never allow him the space he needs. Some have a rich heritage or a partner on hand, while others are artists who live in poverty.

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7 Your Main Business is Marketing

Before you start your own business, you must have a Marketing Strategy. A marketing strategy provides you with a game plan for your customers or clients.

The big surprise is something many freelancers and self-employed people just overlook when they get started: at least twenty percent of your business is in marketing your products or services. This is not a marketing course, but I will give you some information so you can get an idea of what it is you are waiting for—and, what will be necessary for you to succeed as a freelancer, a self-employed specialist in (**your business here**), or a small business owner.

Every product or service—even the very best ones—will not succeed without a strong marketing strategy. This begins with a comprehensive, yet flexible plan. First, you must know to whom you are marketing your product or service. You must identify the types of customers who would be looking for your products and services. Are they all within a certain industry, or are you aiming for private customers? Are there many industries that hire freelancers with your expertise?

7.1 Locating Leads

Next, you must decide what sources you will use to locate and attract potential customers. Everyone you speak to will have a different opinion on this subject. Some people feel that classified ads are a waste of time and that word-of-mouth is the only way to go. Others believe that intermediary agents will get them the jobs they want. Find out what works best for you. Use all methods of tracking down as many potential customers as you need or can handle.

7.1.2 Contacting Prospective Customers

You will then need to decide how you will contact your leads. Generally, making a cold call and sending a flyer or prospectus (you have to have this kind of stuff) accompanied by a concise cover letter, is the way to go. Don't give potential customers too much information. You just want to pique their interests enough to make further contact—that's all. Nobody ever conducted business just by sending a letter in the mail. Never send a blind mail to a company or organization. Always address it to a specific person by name and department. If someone provides you with this contact, he or she can advise you how to address it. Remember, if you want to use e-mail, send an introductory message first, and then ask if it is okay to send more information. Many people don't open unexpected attachments.

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7.1.2 Getting Organized

A very important aspect of marketing is organization. If you don't keep yourself organized, you will misplace important names and telephone numbers. When you need this information later to follow up, you will have to spend valuable time searching for it. You don't need anything fancy. For starters, your iPhone or MS Outlook will provide you with everything you need to keep your contacts organized.

7.1.3 Start a Website

In business nowadays, you don't exist if you don't have a company website. You don't have to develop and build it yourself, but you do have to have it—it communicates your business value better.

7.2 Do You Hate Selling?

Still enthusiastic about becoming an entrepreneur or being self-employed? Many of my clients hate what they call "selling." Marketing is somewhat different though, and you can find many books to teach you about selling (e.g., professional services) at Amazon. Most of the time, they do the trick.

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8 Seven Steps on the Entrepreneurial Road Ahead

8.1 Give yourself time to think about your business idea

You can divide people roughly into two types: the thinkers and the doers. If you are a thinker, this advice is unnecessary. If you are a doer—kick-chasers, mothers, representatives, and workaholics are often doers—this advice is important. Look into yourself and think about the entire upcoming process. Handle roadblocks on the way as I described in part one of this book. Take your time and proceed when you are really ready for it.

8.2 Scale it down

Unless you have an idea for knocking out Microsoft, you don't need a 50-plus page plan. Most early-stage companies can do with a strategic outline of about ten to fifteen pages. Start by making your plan just big enough to manage your next six to twelve months. The heart of a plan is strategy (see the next steps).

8.3 Imagine your basics

Bigger isn't better—it's confusing. You can always add components to your plan as your business grows. Review your capitalization requirements and capital resources. Clearly identify your market, and provide a basic market analysis. List your assumptions, and establish benchmarks. Outline basic financials, including sales forecasts and an expense budget.

8.4 Tap online resources

The Small Business Administration site has guidelines and templates for creating a plan (http://www.sba.gov/content/templates-writing-business-plan). Search Google for information you need.

8.5 Have a fallback plan

If everything goes according to your plan, that's great. But many entrepreneurs need a plan-B for contingency. Put in a line that says, "If we don't have X dollars in sales by this date, and we haven't obtained profitability, we will _____,"—take up a part-time job as a sidecar, change market tactics, alter the business offer, sell the summerhouse—you name it. Anything you need to get going and give your business a new opportunity is okay. But let there be change in your plans and actions! Only selling the summerhouse, getting a loan, or less while maintaining your business as it is will surely lead you into bankruptcy.

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8.6 Ask for help

Before putting your plan into action or talking to potential investors, seek the counsel of trusted friends, business owners, and other entrepreneurs. Have them review your business plan, and listen to their suggestions. You typically get one shot with an investor, and vetting your plan is a good way to fill in holes and anticipate questions. If the investor is you, then you had better listen to friends and relatives. You can only spend your money once.

8.7 Keep your plan fresh

Schedule a few hours every month to review your plan. This will ensure that you use the plan as a living document. Use these review hours to gauge what's working and what needs to be altered about your business. Ask yourself, "Is the initial plan still viable?"

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9 Tests that help you Find Your Way

Some of these exercises may be redundant if you read My Career Guide.

However, some people could still feel a bit uncertain, or they could use some help with tracing unconscious obstacles. The following tests and exercises may help you become more aware of goals, inner voices, and obstacles. Other tests that follow will provide you more insight into your abilities, capabilities, and ideas of a perfect work environment.

Just think carefully for a couple of minutes about each question. It might help to close your eyes while you think. When you have the answer, write it down.

9.1 My Calling

1. What could I imagine myself doing if I didn't have to go to work for a year?
2. When I was young, what were the things I enjoyed doing? How about now? Could I fit more of these things into my life now? How can I do that?
3. What keeps me going in my everyday life? What's happening inside me? What's happening in the outside world that involves me? Are there some things I would rather not face? What are these things?
4. Am I tired, or do I feel energized most of the time? What gives me energy, and what things wear me out?
5. Am I working to gain some kind of approval from somebody (mother, father, husband, child, etc.)? Who would be very disappointed if I slowed down?
6. What is missing in my life right now? What would I like to add to my life?
7. What does this exercise entail for me? What other feelings or thoughts came up because of it?
8. Name three people you admire greatly.
9. What do you admire in these people, and why do you have such admiration for them?
10. Name three people you see as your role models?
11. What do these people mean to you?
12. What do they tell you? (What do they provide you with along the way?)
13. What is (are) your goal(s) in this life?

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Wrap it up. What is the picture? What is it that you have to do or change in your life to make it more in line with your core strengths and beliefs? Look around for a trusted family member or friend—someone who would like to see you grow and be happy and successful. Talk with this person about your thinking and considerations regarding making a job or career shift. Sharpen your ideas this way.

9.2 Roadblocks and Obstacles

Rate yourself from one to ten regarding what describes you most.

1 = Not very much like me

5 = Neither like me nor different

10 = Very much like me

1	Optimistic:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	Pessimistic:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3	Confident:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4	Self-doubting:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5	Energetic:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6	Lethargic:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7	Adaptable:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8	Rigid:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9	Trusting:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10	Fearful:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	Accepting:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12	Angry:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
13	Forthright:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14	Timid:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
15	Risk-taker:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
16	Risk-averse:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

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Now, after you finish this exercise, take a closer look at the even-numbered words and how you scored them. For each time that you scored a word higher than six (6), you can count on the fact that you have an issue with that characteristic.

Sit down and ask yourself, "What makes me Pessimistic/Rigid/Risk-averse? What is it that is slowing me down in my career?"

Let's assume you give yourself a high score on Pessimistic. Now that you know this, you need to work on it. You thought about your pessimism, and you came to the conclusion that luck is for the other guys. You were not born with it, and you have enough evidence to prove it.

Now, ask yourself, "Am I sure that luck is for others and not for me? Am I absolutely sure? Can I be definitely absolutely sure that luck never will be on my side?"

You know the answer. You can't be absolutely sure. So, what did you gain by thinking this way? Pessimistic thinking hasn't brought you any luck or happiness. But it must have brought you something valuable at some point, because it brought enough value for you to adopt the thought and make it your own!

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The next question you should ask yourself is, “Is this value still worthwhile?” Or is this something you should leave in the past. Maybe you need to do the exercise of cruelty a couple of times when you feel pessimistic thoughts popping up.

Do this work for every word in the list that you scored 6 or higher on. Start with the tens, then the nines, the eights, the sevens, and finally, the sixes.

It will take some time, but this exercise can help you grow, and it makes it possible for you to take career steps you would otherwise never dare dream of.

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10 Needs Profile

10.1 Part One

Preferences with a key element: What is important to you? What do you need in (working) life?

Score each element in the table below.

A. Mark a cross (X) under the A on elements you want to realize at least? (Choose no more than 4).
B. Mark a cross (X) under the B on elements that are of the least importance to you.
C. Mark a cross (X) under the C on elements that are insufficiently achieved in your current job.

After you have finished filling in the table (on the next page), ask yourself, "Are the things that seem to be important to me in my working life aligned with my career goals and with the job I want do next? If not, how can I better align these things with each other?" Now, adjust your career goals as necessary.

A	B	C
A high salary:		
Status:		
Prestige:		
Many friends:		
Pleasant contacts:		
Pleasant dealings with superiors:		
Work close to home:		
Using my expertise:		
Power:		
Independence:		
Challenge:		
Leisure facilities in the workplace:		
Opportunities for training and education:		
Learning about new developments:		
Opportunities for career development:		
Much leisure time:		

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11 Needs Profile

11.1 Part Two

Key element: What is important for you?

Score each element in the table below.

A. Mark a cross (X) under the A on elements you want to realize at least? (Choose no more than 4).
B. Mark a cross (X) under the B on elements that are of the least importance to you.
C. Mark a Cross (X) under the C on elements that are insufficiently achieved in your current job.

Once again, after you finish filling in the table (on the next page), ask yourself, "Are the things that seem to be important to me in my working life aligned with my career goals and with the job I want do next? If not, how can I better align these things with each other?" Now, adjust your career goals as necessary.

A	B	C
More time with the family:		
Security:		
Less stressful work:		
Cultural environment:		
Visibility in my own organization:		
Visibility in my industry/discipline:		
A lot of responsibility:		
A chance to travel:		
People leadership:		
A position with many contacts:		

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11.2 Working Roles That Feel Comfortable For You

11.2.1 Part one

In this exercise, I will ask you to choose one answer for each question. Choose the one you feel the most comfortable with—the one that energizes you. This exercise contains three parts. After you have finished the third part, you can read to determine what your "favorite role" looks like. It is possible that multiple answers appeal to you. In that case, you may pick two answers. You can do that by writing one (1) to qualify the most suitable answer and two (2) for the answer that appeals to you second best

Go for it! Don't think too long. Just follow your feelings, and mark your favorite answers.

MY EXCLUSIVE ROLE:
1. Take care of the outcome/results
2. Operations, organizer
3. Innovator, entrepreneur
4. Ensuring cooperation
I STAND OUT FOR:
1. Getting things done
2. Getting the house in order and keeping it that way
3. New ideas, new projects
4. Achieving unity
MY TYPICAL BEHAVIOR:
1. Compulsively busy
2. Managing implementation
3. Pushing new projects through various departments
4. Making compromises, integrating ideas from others

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11.3 Traits You Admire Most in Your Superiors

11.3.1 Part Two

This time, complete the worksheets based on your impressions of one boss (or teacher) you admire and a person you could get along with very well.

Go for it! Don't think too long. What are the traits you admire most of the figurehead in your working life?

MY EXCLUSIVE ROLE:

1. Take care of the outcome/results
2. Operations, organizer
3. Innovator, entrepreneur
4. Ensuring cooperation

I STAND OUT FOR:

1. Getting things done
2. Getting the house in order and keeping it that way
3. New ideas, new projects
4. Achieving unity

MY TYPICAL BEHAVIOR:

1. Compulsively busy
2. Managing implementation
3. Pushing new projects through various departments
4. Making compromises, integrating ideas from others

FOCUS OF ATTENTION:

1. Issues currently in play
2. How the work is done
3. What's new about what must be done? Can it be done differently?
4. The extent to which we can accept what happens

NOTABLE FEATURES:

1. Exceptionally diligent, workaholic
2. Systematic, cautious, and conservative
3. Enthusiastic, stimulating, exciting
4. Happy, sensitive, people-oriented, full of understanding

TYPICAL COMPLAINT:

1. The day is too short: too much to do, not enough time
2. Someone broke a rule/policy/procedure
3. Nothing ever gets finished here
4. We might work better together

DECISION MAKING:

1. Acts first, thinks and analyzes later
2. Follows existing decisions
3. Everything is temporary. There are no permanent duties.
4. Only when there is unity within the group

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11.4 What Traits Do You NOT Work Well With?

11.4.1 Part Three

This time, complete the worksheets based on your impressions of one boss (or teacher) you did not get along with very well…to put it mildly.

Go for it! Don't think too long. What are the traits that disgust you most of this figurehead in your working life?

MY EXCLUSIVE ROLE:

1. Take care of the outcome/results
2. Operations, organizer
3. Innovator, entrepreneur
4. Ensuring cooperation

I STAND OUT FOR:

1. Getting things done
2. Getting the house in order and keeping it that way
3. New ideas, new projects
4. Achieving unity

MY TYPICAL BEHAVIOR:

1. Compulsively busy
2. Managing implementation
3. Pushing new projects through various departments
4. Making compromises, integrating ideas from others

FOCUS OF ATTENTION:

1. Issues currently in play
2. How the work is done
3. What's new about what must be done? Can it be done differently?
4. The extent to which we can accept what happens

NOTABLE FEATURES:

1. Exceptionally diligent, workaholic
2. Systematic, cautious, and conservative
3. Enthusiastic, stimulating, exciting
4. Happy, sensitive, people-oriented, full of understanding

TYPICAL COMPLAINT:

1. The day is too short: too much to do, not enough time
2. Someone broke a rule/policy/procedure
3. Nothing ever gets finished here
4. We might work better together

DECISION MAKING:

1. Acts first, thinks and analyzes later
2. Follows existing decisions
3. Everything is temporary. There are no permanent duties.
4. Only when there is unity within the group

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11.5 Elaboration and Results

Take into account your favorite answers on parts one and two of the exercise!

If you checked most of the answers with the number one (1), this indicates that you are comfortable in a role where productivity is demanded. Decisiveness and result-oriented are keywords for the **Producer**. This person can work well under pressure. He produces short-term results.

If you checked most of the answers with the number two (2), this indicates that you are comfortable in a role where you're focused on controlling what happens around you. Compliancy to systems and procedures is a central element in the policies of the **Manager**. He works neatly and systematically. If he has some producer components within him, he could be an excellent project manager as well.

If you checked most of the answers with the number three (3), this indicates that you are comfortable in an entrepreneurial role. Trying new things, following headlines, and a dislike for details characterize the **Entrepreneur**. A man with initiative who knows how to handle uncertainties. He also operates well in unstructured situations.

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If you checked most of the answers with the number four (4), this indicates that you feel at home in the role of **Integrator/Coordinator**. Motivation and cooperation are matters that the integrator gives priority to in everything he does. He is truly in the right place if he must handle many contacts and cooperate with many other functions and departments.

11.5.1 Caricature

The descriptions here are a bit of a caricature. Many readers will not feel as though they fit solely in one role.

What matters most here is not elevating you into a caricature, but rather it is important to have an indication of your dominant work style. Often, two or more styles can be applicable.

Your dominant style of work provides information about the type of organizations (and management styles) you feel comfortable with.

I've had some clients who dared to score three or even four dominant styles. They had more or less the same number of answers for each category. These clients often have trouble because there are no jobs in demand with four different management styles. Here, the third part of the exercise can help because it eliminates one or two options. If it doesn't, then you had better sleep on it overnight, and then gather some blank sheets of paper and repeat the exercise all over again tomorrow. This time, discriminate more in your answers. Only mark the answers you ***really*** feel comfortable with.

Now take into account your score in part three of the exercise!

The marks you made here indicate a work style you don't like. This information completes the picture of your dominant management style preference. Even if you don't pursue a management position, you will feel comfortable in an environment where this style dominates the culture of the organization.

Sometimes a client completing part three of the exercise has in mind a person they really don't like, but it is for reasons other than his management style. In this case, the result of the test is misleading. Do part three one more time with someone in mind who you don't like only as a result of his management style. That will clear the air.

11.5.2 Application

In the operation of large production-oriented organizations (GM, Texas Oil, AT&T), you will encounter styles with many production & management elements.

In healthcare (and other care areas), you will find many people with strong production & integration elements in their work style.

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Small dynamic companies and business owners will attract employees tending more to production & entrepreneurial elements.

In government agencies, the management style may be expected to be dominant.

11.6 Basic Skills You Excel in and Like to Employ

The following list includes the most basic skills that people may require in their work

Compared with your current and past jobs as well as other activities, which skills are you good at?

First, complete the list by marking skills you are good at, and then do it a second time to mark skills you should improve upon.

	Strong	Weak
COMMUNICATIONS: - Talking - Listening - Writing - Reading - Computing		
INTELLIGENCE: - Analytical thinking - Creative thinking - Intuitive thinking - Learning - Memory		
ARTISTIC POWER: - Vision - Expression		
COMMUNICATION SKILLS: - Sensing others' feelings - Interest in thinking about others - Providing feedback - Building and maintaining networks		
TEAMWORK: - See roles and positions within a group - Free and daring to act in public - Appropriate contribution to group processes - Steers group behavior		

In just a few words, wrap up your stronger and your weaker sides. Compare these traits with your next job and career goals. Is there some work to do? Do it. Start today.

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12 Wrap up the Test Results and Exercises

12.1 Who am I?

What is your career goal in life? What do you want people to say about you at your funeral? What is your professional calling?

12.2 What are my abilities?

What are my strengths, the things I like to do and am really good at it? What are my favorite work areas and my favorite roles in work? What are my levels of education and experience?

12.3 What am I looking for?

What field of work? What kind of work? What kind of organization? What challenges? What kind of people do I want to work with?

12.4 What do I want?

For a salary or income? Maximum travel time from home to work and vice versa? Hours per week I want to spend with the family, or at the tennis club, or…you get the idea.

What do I want my next step to be in my career, and for how long? What will be the next step after that?

12.5 What suits me?

My own business or a regular job? Which business, which companies, which areas of work, and which job descriptions serve my goals the best?

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13 Your Perfect Job Description

Now it's time to finish your career exploration with your perfect job description. Make it no longer than twenty sentences. If you have some trouble writing, then see the Writer's Block section on Self-Help-Career.com. It will forever release you from writer's block in no time.

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14 Exploring the Self-Employed and Small Business World

14.1 Ten-Minute Networking Questions

Do you remember the ten-minute job marketing meetings Camila had in part one of this book? If you are thinking about becoming self-employed or having a small business of your own, this technique is also very powerful for you.

Identify people who are working full-time, in sidecar-style, as small-business owners, or as freelancers in fields or areas of interest to you. If you don't know someone like that, talk about it with friends and family. Tell people you are interested in this kind of work and want to pursue it. Chances are someone knows someone who is working in that area, and they would be happy to introduce you. Family, friends, neighbors, present or past colleagues, and alumni from your high school, college, or graduate school are all good sources for finding people to interview. Once you have their names, addresses, voicemail numbers, and/or e-mail addresses, you can contact the people who sound most interesting, and ask them if you could have ten minutes to ask them a few questions about their work. Usually, they'll say yes—particularly if you lead with the name of a mutual acquaintance who sent you. Here are some questions you might want to ask:

1. How did you decide to be a _____, and what was it like to get started?
2. What exactly is it that you do? How much time each week do you spend doing it?
3. What necessary skills and training did you need to get started? How did you get them?
4. What kind of strategizing did you have to do to arrange your work to your own liking? What advice would you give to people who are just starting out to help them arrange their work to their own liking too?
5. What about your field makes it difficult and/or easy to become self-employed and successful?
6. Were there particular problems you had to work through?
7. What about resources? Did you need other business and legal advice? If so, where did you find it?
8. ow much money did you need to become self-employed?
9. re there any books, organizations, or websites related to your field or the process of becoming self-employed that you'd recommend?
10. Where can I find other self-employed and small-business owners to get help or companionship? Is there a kind of meeting that I might possibly attend with you sometime?
11. what are the best and worst things about being self-employed?

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Also:

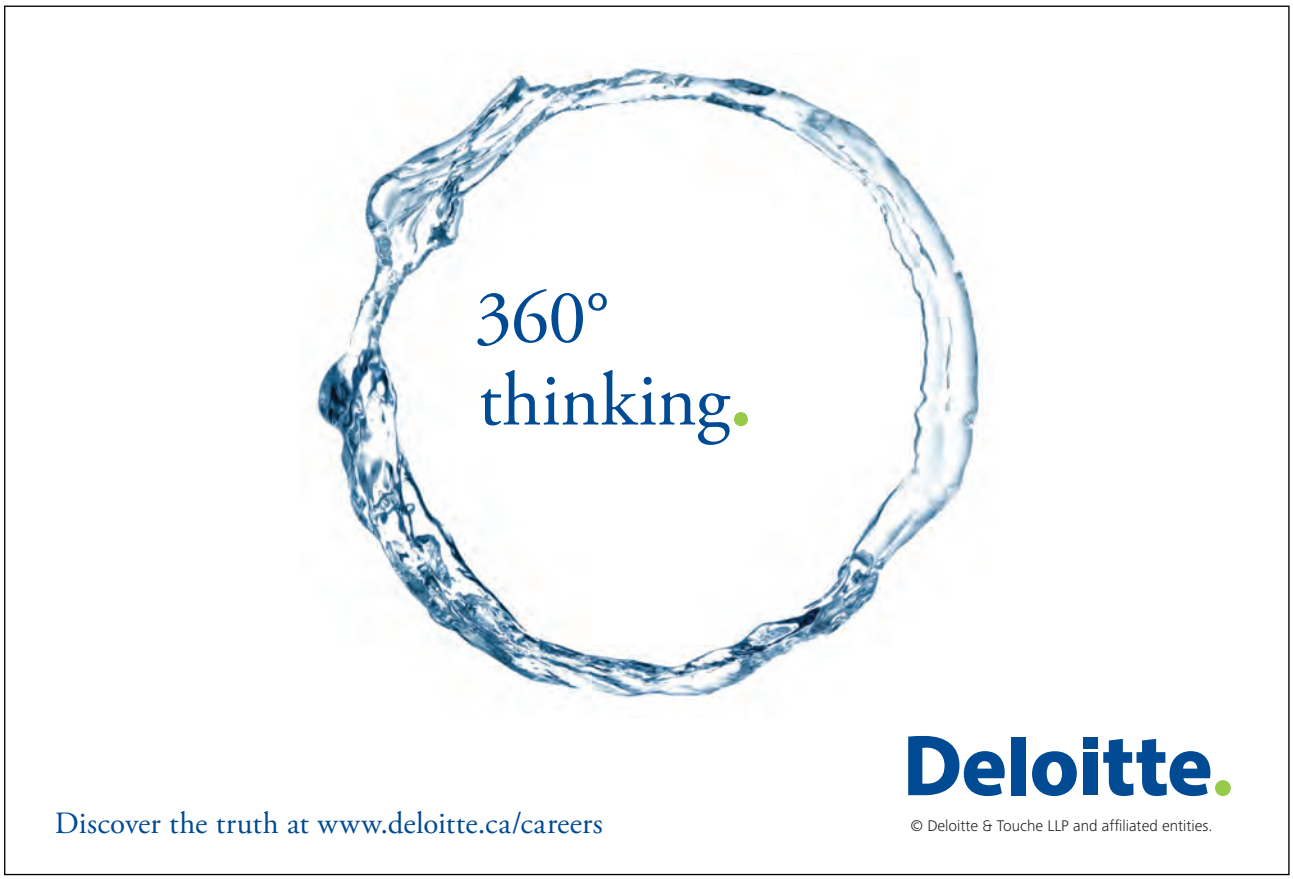
12. If you're also an employee of an organization, how do you work out your divided loyalties?
13. Does your "other boss" know about your self-employed work?
14. What are you doing about items such as health and disability insurance, as well as retirement?

Select a couple of questions you are most interested in. Don't make it an interrogation. Try to make it look like a small conversation. If you still have more questions, or new ones arise during the conversation, keep them in mind and write them on a piece of paper. You can always return later to ask them (after you have spoken with some other people as well).

Before you know it, you could be a source of information for the people you are talking with, because you are taking the time to learn things they have not learned yet.

14.2 Don't Forget Your Manners!

At the end of the interview, thank them for their time, and remember to follow up with a thank-you note within twenty-four hours. It's also courteous (and a good networking gesture) to let them know how you're doing from time to time, and thank them again. As a freelancer, you can never know too many people!



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15 Marjorie Mensink

Marjorie Mensink is a professional career coach specialized in career choices, job marketing, and resume development. She has extensive experience in helping thousands of people to find the jobs they want. She provides them with insightful and powerful tools for finding and landing jobs. Jobs that are in line with a person's true purpose in working life.

Over the years, she coached and trained thousands of men and women helping them to fix their stumbled careers and teaching them how to bring the jobs they need within reach.

After a career in Human Resources, she started her own company and a very successful practice in Career Coaching.

She is the author of:

- My Career Guide
- My Winning Resume
- My Job Marketing Skills

She has also co-authored and hosted a number of other leading online courses such as:

- How to Repair Burned Career Bridges
- How to make you Irreplaceable At Work
- Sell Yourself in Ten minutes

Marjorie lives with her husband in Santa Barbara, California.

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16 Endnotes

1. The original list stems from a Dutch writer, Thijs van den Boomen, www.allesoverfreelancen.nl

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